

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01 AGRE-00 /087 W

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R 081211Z OCT 76

FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2698

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EPAP, PINT, UR

SUBJ: FOOD SUPPLIES IN LATVIA

1. SUMMARY: A SURVEY OF STORES AND MARKETS IN VENTSPILS, LATVIA ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3 AND IN RIGA ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, INDICATES FOOD SUPPLIES COMPARE WELL WITH THOSE IN LENINGRAD AND EXCEED THE LENINGRAD STANDARD IN SEVERAL RESPECTS. WHILE FOOD STORES IN BOTH CITIES EXHIBIT THE SAME DRAB LACK OF APPEAL THAT MARK SOVIET STORES IN GENERAL, GOODS SEEM TO BE PACKAGED A BIT MORE NEATLY AND ARE IN SOMEWHAT MORE PLENTIFUL SUPPLY THAN IN LENINGRAD. MANY OF THE GOODS CARRY LATVIAN LABELS. SUPPLY OF MEAT APPEARS TO LAG SLIGHTLY BEHIND THAT OF LENINGRAD. HOWEVER, LATVIANS HOLD THEIR OWN IN THE SUPPLY OF VEGETABLES. IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF BREADS AND ESPECIALLY PASTRIES, THEY FAR OUTDISTANCE LENINGRADERS, AND RIGA'S SMALL COFFEE AND PASTRY SHOPS STILL MAKE TRIP THERE WORTHWHILE. END SUMMARY.

2. VENTSPILS: NO MEAT WAS OBSERVED ON SALE, BUT IT WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUNDAY AND THE CENTRAL MEAT STORE WAS CLOSED. THERE

WAS SAUSAGE, HOWEVER, AND A PLENTIFUL SUPPLY OF CHEESE, INCLUDING NEVER-TO-BE-SEEN-IN-LENINGRAD ROCQUEFORT. CANNED FISH WAS ALSO ABUNDANT. FRESH CARP WAS ON SALE IN THE SMALL OUTDOOR MARKET (R1.20) -(THIS AND ALL SUBSEQUENT PRICES PER KILO AND IN NATIONAL CURRENCY UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.) THIS MARKET OFFERED A GOOD SUPPLY AND VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AT MOSTLY MODERATE PRICES. AVAILABLE WERE: PEARS OF POOR QUALITY (40K); GOOD RED PLUMS (40K); BETTER BLACK PLUMS (60K); APPLES (40K); SMALL HEADS OF CABBAGE (30-50K PER HEAD); RADISHES (20K PER BUNCH) AND CARROTS (40K PER BUNCH). THE PRICE OF TOMATOES HAS BEGUN TO MARK THE WANING OF THE SEASON. GOOD TOMATOES WERE AVAILABLE AT THE MARKET AT R1.40 AND AT A STATE STORE AT R1.20.

3. RIGA: THE FOOD SUPPLY WAS BETTER IN RIGA ON MONDAY THAN IN VENTSPILS ON SUNDAY, AS INDICATED BY A CHECK OF THE CENTRAL KILKHOZ MARKET AND SEVERAL STATE STORES IN THE CENTER AND OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY. THE MEAT HALL AT THE CENTRAL KOKLHOZ MARKET WAS CLOSED FOR "SANITARY DAY", BUT MEAT WAS AVAILABLE IN STATE STORES. FRUITS AND VEGETABLES WERE ABUNDANT.

(A) THE LARGE STATE STORE LOCATED ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE CENTRAL DEPARTMENT STORE OFFERED A GOOD GRADE OF VEAL IN MODERATE SUPPLY TO A LONG LINE OF CONSUMERS AT R1.80. DRESSED HENS PREPARED WESTERN-STYLE (I.E., NO FEET, NO HEADS, AND INNARDS TUCKED NEATLY INTO CARCASS IN A PLASTIC BAG) IN GOOD SUPPLY (R2.80-3.20) AND A POOR GRADE OF BEEF (R1.70). THIS STORE ALSO OFFERED A GOOD SUPPLY OF CHEESE AND DAIRY PRODUCTS AND OF CANNED, COOKED, AND FROZEN FISH. FRESH FLOUNDER AND A FEW SHRIMP WERE OFFERED FOR SALE. WHEN CONSOFF RETURNED TO STORE IN THE EVENING, THE VEAL WAS GONE AND A BETTER GRADE OF BEEF WAS DISPLAYED.

(B) MEAT WAS ALSO TO BE FOUND IN OTHER STORES, BUT THE CONSUMER HAD TO GO TO DIFFERENT STORES TO EXERCISE CHOICE. EACH STORE VISITED HAD SOME KIND OF MEAT AND CHICKEN OR FISH. FRYERS (R1.60) AND BEEF IN SMALL QUANTITIES OF DIFFERENT GRADES RANGING FROM POOR QUALITY (R1.50 AND 1.70) TO MEDIUM QUALITY (R1.90) TO GOOD QUALITY (R2.36) COULD BE FOUND. IN TWO CASES, THE SAME STORE HAD A CHOICE OF GRADES OF BEEF. ONE STORE AT THE VERY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EDGE OF TOWN HAD NO MEAT EXCEPT A FEW "ROMSHTEKS" (BREADED, CHOPPED CUTLET) (20K EA.) BUT FEATURED FRESH CARP. CONSOFF ALSO OBSERVED "BEKON" (K2.00) AND A FAT ROLLED TYPE OF PORK CALLED "ROULET LENINGRADSKIY" IN GOOD SUPPLY (R3.50) BUT LINE WAS LONG. SMALL WEINER TYPE SAUSAGES MUCH FAVORED BY RUSSIANS CALLED "MILK SAUSAGES," WERE ABUNDANT (R2.50) AS WERE SMALL "SNACK SAUSAGES" (R1.70). CHEESE, INCLUDING ROCQUEFORT AND CHEDDAR, AND CANNED AND PREPARED FISH WERE ALSO WIDELY AVAILABLE.

(C) AS IN LENINGRAD, THE OPEN AIR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKET REFLECTED BOTH THE CULINARY AND ETHNIC VARIETY OF THE COUNTRY. THE MOST NOTABLE EXCEPTION, IN VENTSPILS AS WELL AS IN RIGA, WAS FRESH CUCUMBERS, THE SEASON FOR WHICH IS OVER. FOR VEGETABLES, THE OFFERING WAS: PARSLEY (20K PER 100 GRAMS); POTATOES (10K); RADISHES 25K A BUNCH); TOMATOES (FROM 80K TO R1.80, DEPENDING ON QUALITY); CARROTS (30-40 AND 50K PER BUNCH); GARLIC (10K PER CLOVE AND 25 PER ROOT); PREPARED HORSERADISH (60K PER SMALL JAR); HOT RED PEPPERS (10K A POD); GREEN PEPPERS (R1.00); CAULIFLOWER (R2.00); DILL (50K PER 100 GRAMS); LETTUCE (40 AND 50K PER 100 GRAMS); ONIONS (R1.00 AND 1.50); GREEN ONIONS (20K PER 100 GRAMS); PICKLED CUCUMBERS (20K PER 100 GRAMS); FINE CABBAGE (40K); SAUERKRAUT (80K); RUTABAGA (80K); CELERY (20K PER 100 GRAMS); AND BEET ROOT (10-60K).

(D) FRUIT WAS ALSO EASILY AVAILABLE AT VARIOUS PRICES AND QUALITY. GRAPES (90K) WERE IN LARGE SUPPLY. AT THE MARKET, CONSUMERS COULD PURCHASE: APPLES (20 TO 80K); BLUEBERRIES (40K); PEARS (40-R2.50); WATERMELONS (40-50K); PLUMS (40-50K); BLACK AND RED CURRANTS (80K); AND, FOR EXOTIC TASTES AND LARGE PURSES, POMEGRANATES (R1.00 AND 2.00 APIECE). BY WAY OF VARIETY, MACADAMIA NUTS WERE AVAILABLE (1.00 PER SMALL GLASSFUL); ENGLISH WALNUTS (R3.00) AND DECORATIVE GOURDS (60K EA.).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUPPLIES, LATVIA, FOODS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LENING01650
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760381-0049
From: LENINGRAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761068/aaaachfp.tel
Line Count: 140
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <18 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOOD SUPPLIES IN LATVIA
TAGS: EPAP, PINT, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006